

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. WOLF *CANIS LUPUS* KILLING A GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD *ARDEOTIS NIGRICEPS*

On the morning of 15 June 1994, I was observing a pack of eight wolves in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Nannaj (17° 41' N, 75° 56' E) in Solapur district of Maharashtra State. The pack comprising six juveniles and two adults (alpha pair) was sitting/lying in a pasture of the Sanctuary. An adult great Indian bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* (territorial male) was also roosting besides a tussock of grass, about 200 m from its display arena in the same pasture. It was the dominant male (alpha) of the area. Usually the cock used to start the courtship-display by 0600 h, when it becomes bright but because of the cloudy weather it was roosting till 0630 h. The wolves were about 100 m from the bustard. At 0630 h, the male wolf slowly moved towards the roosting bustard, pausing at a distance of about 10 m from it. Then it moved very very carefully, not letting the bustard know its presence and movement. When it reached quite close (2-3 m) the wolf jumped on the cock and caught it by one of its wings, but within seconds the bustard released itself from the grip of the wolf and instead of flying away, it started charging at the predator aggressively by raising the neck and fluffing feathers. However, the wolf was not frightened and caught it again. Soon other members of the pack, who were watching from a distance, joined the fray. The bustard was killed and torn apart within two minutes. It was tightly held by the male wolf in his mouth till the other wolves came in.

After removing the feathers, the body of the bustard was carried away by the juveniles about 150 m from the killing spot and it was eaten in ten minutes. The parent

fed on the pectoral girdles and the calamus (calamii) of the flight wings. On examining the spot, these calamii were filled with fluid. The rectrices were quite heavy and appeared dark blue externally because of the presence of this fluid. The parent wolves allowed the juveniles to take the kill away from them and feed on it, but the latter quarreled over the kill with one another: a juvenile running away with the kill, followed by its companion, then another individual managing to get hold of the kill and trying to escape with it, and so on. This activity prolonged the process of finishing the kill which otherwise would have been finished within five minutes or even less time. Earlier in 1993 probably the same adult male bustard was seen to threaten four wolves when they came to the daytime resting site of the former after eating a Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra*. The bustard had chased off the wolves at that time from its resting spot.

The same evening (i.e. 15 June) another adult male was seen in the display arena. It started displaying after 11 days at exactly the same spot which was used by the killed male. The territorial cock was killed because of its reluctance to leave the territory. Incidentally, the same spot is in use for display by bustards for the last 15 years (Rahmani 1994, pers. comm.).

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2. FURTHER NOTES ON FROG-EATING HABIT OF GREY MUSK SHREW *SUNCUS MURINUS*

In my previous note (Sharma 1991, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 88:109), I described a grey musk shrew *Suncus murinus* attacking a *Rana tigerina* in Jaipur district. Recently, on 1.9.1993 at about 1000 h, I observed an adult grey musk shrew feeding on a *Toimopterna breviceps* in a cemented tank with no water, at Jhadol Village in Udaipur district. First, the head of the frog was bitten many times and then it started devouring the frog head first. Skin, flesh and bones were eaten. When almost one-third of the body of the frog was finished, I disturbed the shrew to collect the remaining part of the frog for identification.

The frog was identified by the presence of the large and shovel-shaped inner metatarsal tubercle and half-webbed toes.

One subadult *R. tigerina* was also present in the tank which had not been attacked by the shrew. They had accidentally fallen into the tank during the previous night. *T. breviceps* is more 'sluggish' than *R. tigerina*, hence perhaps was easily attacked by the shrew.

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